

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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EB-07 FEA-01 INT-05 AGRE-00 /088 W
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R 120734Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5617
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1277

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ZA
SUBJ: POLITICAL ASPECT OF KAUNDA'S APRIL 24 GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE

REF: (A) LUSAKA 0024 (NOTAL); (B) LUSAKA 1118 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ONE ELEMENT IN KAUNDA'S APRIL 24 GOVERNMENT RE-
SHUFFLE (REFTEL B)--THE DISMISSAL OF MINISTER OF MINES SOKO--
IS INTERPRETED BY SOME IN LUSAKA AS A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL
MOVE AIMED AT ENCOURAGING BEMBA LEADER SIMON KAPWEPWE TO
RETURN TO UNIP. SOKO'S DISMISSAL WILL COST KAUNDA SUPPORT IN
THE EASTERN PROVINCE, AND THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME KAUNDA
HAS HAD TO PAY A POLITICAL PRICE IN HIS ATTEMPTS TO WOO
KAPWEPWE. THIS DEMONSTRATES HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KAUNDA
POLITICALLY TO BRING KAPWEPWE BACK. END SUMMARY.

1. SOME OBSERVERS IN LUSAKA ARE ADVANCING THE FOLLOWING
EXPLANATION OF PRESIDENT KAUNDA'S APRIL 24 DISMISSAL OF
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MINISTER OF MINES AXON SOKO (REFTEL B). FOR SOME TIME THERE
HAS BEEN AN OFF AND ON AGAIN EFFORT BY KAUNDA TO BRING BACK
INTO THE UNIP FOLD ONE-TIME ZAMBIAN VICE PRESIDENT SIMON
KAPWEPWE (REFTEL A), LEADER OF THE DEFUNCT UNITED PROGRESSIVE
PARTY AND A LEADER OF ZAMBIA'S LARGEST TRIBAL GROUP, THE
BEMBA. REPORTEDLY, KAPWEPWE RECENTLY HAD A PRIVATE MEETING
WITH KAUNDA AT STATE HOUSE WHERE HE COMPLAINED OF SOKO'S AND

HIS ACCOMPLICES' OVERZEALOUS EFFORTS TO CONVERT BEMBA INTO UNIP SUPPORTERS. KAPWEPWE ALLEGEDLY POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS REMAINING POLITICALLY INACTIVE AND RESENTED STRONGLY EFFORTS TO SUBORN HIS FOLLOWERS WHILE HE WAS NOT PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE. THE INFERENCE WAS THAT, IF UNIP ATTEMPTS TO CO-OPT HIS SUPPORTERS DID NOT STOP, KAPWEPWE WOULD BELIEVE HIMSELF JUSTIFIED IN ACTIVELY OPPOSING SUCH EFFORTS. KAUNDA, SINCE HE IS SERIOUS ABOUT BRINGING KAPWEPWE BACK INTO UNIP PRIOR TO THE 1978 ELECTIONS AND IS NOT ANXIOUS TO RISK SPURRING AN ACTIVE ANTI-GOVERNMENT EFFORT BY KAPWEPWE, DECIDED TO SACK SOKO WHOSE OVERZEALOUSNESS HAD GENERATED KAPWEPWE'S COMPLAINT.

2. PREVIOUSLY, THE VARIOUS OVERTURES AND DISCUSSION WITH KAPWEPWE HAD BEEN CARRIED ON WITHOUT POLITICAL COST TO KAUNDA (REFTEL A)--NOT SO HIS REMOVAL OF SOKO. SOKO'S REMOVAL COULD AFFECT SIGNIFICANTLY KAUNDA'S SUPPORT IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE. THE SOKO FAMILY AND THEIR SUPPORTERS HAVE LONG BEEN PROMINENT AND INFLUENTIAL IN PROVINCIAL POLITICS. KAUNDA NOW FINDS HIMSELF WITH KAPWEPWE STILL OUTSIDE THE FOLD, WHICH MEANS BEMBA SUPPORT FOR KAUNDA IN THE COPPERBELT AND NORTHERN PROVINCE IS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE, AND NEW ELEMENT OF DISAFFECTION IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE.

COMMENT: WHILE THE EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO VERIFY THE LOCAL ACCOUNTS OF A KAUNDA-KAPWEPWE FACE-OFF, IT HAS A RING OF AUTHENTICITY AND FITS IN WITH KAUNDA'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON APRIL 24 THAT SOKO WAS FIRED FOR TRYING TO ORGANIZE EX-UPP MEMBERS IN EASTERN PROVINCE FOR A RETURN TO THE FOLD. ON THE SURFACE SUCH CONDUCT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED NOT REPRIMANDED. IF, HOWEVER, THERE IS AS CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTED A KAPWEPWE CONNECTION, IT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER. KEEPING HIS LINES OPEN TO KAPWEPWE IN THE HOPE OF HIS EVENTUAL SUPPORT IN THE 1978 GNEERAL ELECTIONS IS WORTH PAYING A POLITICAL PRICE. THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF SUPPORT IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE THROUGH THE DISMISSAL OF SOKO IS A RISK BUT A RISK WORTH TAKING IF BY SO DOING KAUNDA CAN GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE BEMBA SPEAKERS--BETTER THAN 35 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO EARCH, PERHAPS A BIT MORE EAGERLY AS THE 1978 ELECTIONS DRAW CLOSER, FOR A MENAS OF BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN UNIP, KAPWEPWE AND HIS BEMBA SUPPORTERS. ON APRIL 24 KAUNDA ALSO INDICATED THAT PARTY SHUFFLE WAS IN THE OFFING. WHEN THIS OCCURS, IT MAY PROVIDE MORE CLUES TO THE SKEIN OF ALLIANCES, MOST LIKELY ETHNICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY BASED, KAUNDA IS ATTEMPTING TO FORGE TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. END COMMENT.
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